

REBUILDING TINKER'S 3001



Col. Franklin T. Tilton

It was the largest and most expensive reconstruction project ever undertaken by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Air Force.

It was so critical to national defense that the construction had to be completed in record time.

And it was accomplished on time, within budget, with no loss of life — under supervision of the Tulsa District.

What was it? The \$63.5 million reconstruction of a mammoth Tinker Air Force Base building named 3001.

Shortly before noon on Nov. 12, 1984, a spark from a welder's torch touched off a fire at Building 3001 that burned out of control for 40 hours, despite efforts of 500 firemen from 24 military and municipal installations. Three giant helicopters ran a kind of air bucket brigade, bringing water from Draper Lake in 1,000 gallon buckets, to no avail. The fire was sandwiched within the roof, rendering conventional fire-fighting techniques useless. Ultimately,

it was contained by cutting an 8-foot-wide firebreak through the roof.

When the blaze was out, Tinker officials surveyed the damage: 17 acres — 652,500 square feet — of roof was gone. Two thousand tons of structural steel and roof decking were ruined, along with utility lines and 12 major aircraft engine repair stations.

The building, with its solid masonry walls and high single-story maintenance bays, houses operations considered critical to the nation's defense. It is a vital Air Force Logistics Center, the largest of its kind in the world, for maintenance of Air Force aircraft and jet engines. Inside its walls is specialized equipment and processes needed to maintain, overhaul, and modify some 18,000 Air Force jet engines.

Two days after the fire, the Air Force called in the Corps for help, and set a completion date of September 1985, just ten months away.

A spark from a welder's torch touched off a 17-acre fire on the roof of Building 3001, Tinker Air Force Base, in 1984 — leaving the U.S. critically short of facilities for unique defense work that normally is done in that building. The response: rush repairs in record time, under leadership of the Tulsa District. Operations continued in the building, even without the roof and even during snowstorms. Far right bottom photo, Col. Tilton and a representative of construction contractor Hensel Phelps sign the contract for repairs to begin.

